



LOS CAMPESINOS!
Hello Sadness
(Arts & Crafts; November 15th, 2011)



(Credit: Jon Bergman)

Arts & Crafts is proud to announce the release of the newest album by Cardiff, Wales' **Los Campesinos!** entitled ***Hello Sadness*** on **November 15th, 2011**. Recorded earlier this year in Girona, Spain by producer **John Goodmanson** – responsible for the septet's previous two albums, 2008's *We Are Beautiful, We Are Doomed* and 2010's *Romance is Boring* – ***Hello Sadness*** is **Los Campesinos!** at their most melodic, direct and exhilarating, featuring ten songs of love, loss and heartbreak. It is an honest, bare-bones documentation of two people breaking up and trying not to break up in the process, and is simultaneously the most focused collection by **Los Campesinos!** to date.

Ever present are the wry observations, the razor-sharp wordplay and the band's varied instrumentation, combined with some of the saddest, world-weary confessionals **Los Campesinos!** have ever recorded. Indeed, ***Hello Sadness*** is wise beyond its years, exhibited not only in the sincerity, poetry and honesty of its lyrical content, but by the instrumental dynamics of its songs: a band that previously all put their foot on the accelerator pedal at once, a key element of their high octane sound, have learned how to take turns and let each other drive. Yes, things are still loud and upbeat. Yes, lead vocalist **Gareth Campesinos!** still tells it like it is. Yes, theirs is still the perfect middle ground between punk rock, indie pop, Morrissey and The Fall's Mark E. Smith. But each instrument has a settled place; each song sounds incredibly confident in its aim and abilities. The result is a band that has never sounded more together while detailing the impact of a relationship falling apart.

At just ten songs and forty minutes, ***Hello Sadness*** is perhaps the first **Los Campesinos!** album that sounds lean and pruned, indulgence shorn away and filler ruthlessly excised. Opener "**By Your Hand**" envisions death at the hand of a lover – a perfect tune for setting the album's tone

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and theme into place – while songs like “**Baby I Got The Death Rattle**” and “**Light Leaves, Dark Sees Pt. II**” come from a raw, uncertain place that, in their confusion of emotions, feels more authentic than previous **Los Campesinos!** recordings. This is bolstered by the band’s own voices – singing together at least once every song – as a unified message of hope, dismay and need. It’s a confessional feel that’s intensified in places by whispers of incidental sound – the rattle of rain, distant radio, the hiss of room microphones – and snatches of Dictaphone, captured by Gareth in a lonely or introspective moment. It’s an album whose very purpose and complexion changed dramatically when, on the eve of recording, the end of a relationship meant every word that had been penned before had to be rewritten. More heart-on-sleeve than ever before, *Hello Sadness* is **Los Campesinos!** at their very best.

Los Campesinos! are: Gareth Campesinos! (vocals), Tom Campesinos! (guitar), Neil Campesinos! (guitar), Kim Campesinos! (keyboard/vocals), Jason Campesinos! (drums), Rob Campesinos! (keyboard/guitar) and Ellen Campesinos! (bass).

Hello Sadness track listing:

1. By Your Hand
2. Songs About Your Girlfriend
3. Hello Sadness
4. Life Is A Long Time
5. Every Defeat A Divorce (Three Lions)
6. Hate For The Island
7. The Black Bird, The Dark Slope
8. To Tundra
9. Baby I Got The Death Rattle
10. Light Leaves, Dark Sees Pt. II

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Los Campesinos! press biography, August 2011

A lot can happen in the course of two years. People walk out of your life, people special to you – people it's difficult to imagine your world without. Sometimes, they come back. But when they do, they're not who they once were. Soft features have chiselled. That teenage flush around the cheeks has faded. And suddenly, that ghost that mooched around inside your head is gone, replaced by something, somebody new.

'Hello Sadness' is the fourth record by Los Campesinos!, and if 2009's 'Romance Is Boring' marked a giant step on from their genesis – seven kids and a glockenspiel, ricocheting off the four walls of a Cardiff rehearsal room – 'Hello Sadness' constitutes another step, and a turn of the corner. Yes, these 10 tracks cover what we are coming to recognise as core Los Campesinos! concerns – love, loss, heartbreak, football (*always* football). But this is a record that's wiser and more focused than its predecessors, confident in its abilities and clear in its aims.

"It feels like we've done all our growing up while in this band," says vocalist Gareth Campesinos! "Not like we're Hanson, or anything. But we've been Los Campesinos! since finishing university, and in that time we've all changed as people massively. That's something we want to put across in the music."

"We've learned what there's room for, sonically," adds guitarist/songwriter Tom Campesinos! "You start off quite idealistic about what you can actually fit into a song, everything fighting against everything else, and that's fine, it suited those songs. But now it's like everything is pulling towards the same goal. The idea was to make the most coherent, direct record we can."

Initial plans to record at Manic Street Preachers' Faster studios in Cardiff fell by the wayside when a couple of European shows opened up a new possibility: four weeks at Music Lan, a recording studio in Girona, overlooking the Pyrenees. The Los Campesinos! line-up had undergone a couple of reshuffles since the recording of 'Romance Is Boring', Kim Campesinos! joining on backing vocals and keys, Jason Campesinos! taking the drumstool and long-time compadre Rob Taylor – aka Sparky Deathcap – giving up his surname to join LC! in what Tom describes as "the Bob Nastanovich role", singing backing vocals and juggling instruments as required. The Spanish countryside, so far from Cardiff with all its myriad distractions, proved the perfect place to rekindle the Campesinos! spirit, and the arrival of producer John Goodmanson (Sleater-Kinney, Bikini Kill, Wu Tang Clan), a constant with the band since the recording of 'We Are Beautiful, We Are Doomed', closed the circle. "There was this real team ethic," says Tom. "It felt like everyone came together."

On first listen, 'Hello Sadness' might sound like a less fraught album than its predecessors. Gone is the hypertense, panic-attack rattle that characterised 'We Are Beautiful, We Are Doomed', and the melancholy wallow that you heard in corners of 'Romance Is Boring' is in short supply. Play it more, though, and you hear an emotion that comes from somewhere softer, deeper, and – dare we say it – more authentic. Two weeks before recording, Gareth Campesinos! split up with his girlfriend, and, he says, "everything written before then became void."

Naturally, then, he began writing afresh. Many past Los Campesinos! songs have wrestled with matters of the heart, and often played dirty in the process. But songs like 'Baby I Got The Death Rattle' and 'Light Leaves, Dark Sees Pt II' come from a raw, uncertain place that, in their confusion of emotions, feel authentic. "There is anger, upset in them – but still a sense of being very much being in love, of still caring for the person," says Gareth. It's a confessional feel that's intensified in places by whispers of incidental sound – the rattle of rain, distant radio, the hiss of room mics – and snatches of Dictaphone, captured by Gareth in a lonely or introspective moment.

While written at pace, 'Hello Sadness' finds Gareth's lyrics reaching new levels of poetic articulacy. A strange menagerie of creatures – blackbirds, horses, woodworm – stalk and crawl the verses, and the landscape of the human form remains a preoccupation. On the title track, he charts the lines of a lover's body – "The space between your navel/And your waist band was the ice/Where two fingers pirouette" – but any tenderness is unwanted, unrequited. On 'Life Is A Long Time', meanwhile, a catalogue of arguments manifest physically, in creases and wrinkles. "Aging is definitely in mind," says Gareth. "I think a lot of people still think of us in this kind of youthful sense, but we're in this weird place in our mid-twenties where you start to think like a grown-up. I feel more 30 than 20, but you're not really allowed to – everyone wants to tell you how you're still so young. The record in general is about this weird state of limbo – being in a band is an incredible privilege, but it can make it hard to find your place in the world."

All this, though, in a clutch of songs that are more accessible and more direct than anything that's come before. Current musical preoccupations include such reliably lo-fi names as Bruce Springsteen, R&B smoothie The-Dream, and Paul Heaton of The Housemartins and The Beautiful South, who, says Gareth, "really inspired me to try to sing more, rather than shout or yelp, to really work on melodies."

At just 10 songs and 40 minutes, 'Hello Sadness' is perhaps the first Los Campesinos! album that sounds lean and pruned, indulgence shorn away and filler ruthlessly excised. Aiding the process of making a coherent album is the band's extra-curricular hobby, Heat Rash – a quarterly edition zine-and-music bundle, which provides a home for the band's more errant musical ideas that wouldn't fit smoothly into the continuity of an album. Heat Rash also articulates something that's right at the heart of Los Campesinos! – the idea of a manner of communication with the group's fans that stretches beyond the songs themselves, be it visual, online, or simply a conversation over the merch table.

"I think that's one of the best things about being in Los Campesinos!" says Gareth. "How open people who like our band are with us, how willing they are to speak to us and be involved." 'Hello Sadness' marks another chapter in this communication. The youngsters that made 'You! Me! Dancing!' are long gone. The band they've grown into, though, are something to fall for all over again.

WINTER 2011



Sex, Death, Religion

Boiling things down to the basics with Los Campesinos!

CLUBBING FOR LOS CAMPEÑINOS their bad singers have become cranked and hunched over as they were preparing their new album. "It was a weird thing," says Gareth, who like all his bandmates has adopted Campesino! (Spanish: "peasant") as his surname.

"I was attempting to write nine love songs, which is like how many would you do? So I had to tip it up and start again. All the lyrics were, they weren't done successive over a period of about three weeks. They're separate, and quite disjointed."

The result is *Hele Sadness* (New & Gareth), which the Cardiff-based quartet call their third album. (They clarify 2009's 10-song *We Are Beautiful, We Are Damned* as an EP.) The set was recorded in rural Spain with American alt-rock producer John Goodenough, who also supervised last year's *Humour & Being*, and is the group's most musically cohesive effort.

"That's something that we really set out to achieve," Gareth says. "We were aware that with *Humour & Being* there was a great sound in there somewhere. With *Hele Sadness*, we wanted to make something more focused."

All but the band's first EP were recorded outside Wales, with American or Canadian producers. "It's cheaper to record outside the U.K.," Gareth explains. "And it's a lot more fun. We were planning to record *Hele Sadness* in Cardiff, but we decided that would be too many distractions."

The quartet members—including their three sisters—all moved to Cardiff to attend college. None of them were raised in Wales, but all were

happily raised there. "I love Cardiff," Gareth says. "It's been a very comforting and supportive atmosphere for the band. Other people in bands in Cardiff have always been lovely to us."

Los Campesinos! are comfortable in Wales, they're not entirely part of the Welsh music scene. In fact, in their hometown they're not even considered particularly British. "In America we're seen as being a very British band, and in Britain we're seen as being a very American band," Gareth notes. "It's very odd. And quite amusing."

The group's early material was "U.S. college rock and darker indie bands," especially Paramore. But the Campesinos! added vocals, glockenspiel and strings, were vocal harmonies in the mix, as well as a distinctive sensibility that both embraces and disavows.

One of their musical trademarks is the trading of vocals between Gareth and a female member. Originally, it was Alice, who left the group in 2009 over its first, who happens to be Gareth's sister. Explains the frontman, "Part of it was probably that, although I liked writing lyrics, I didn't much like singing. I'd never been much good at singing, so it made sense to put a more-writer alongside it. I also think that, because of the way I like narrative to develop in my songs, it was often useful to have a boy-girl tradition. On this album, the songs are more dominated by myself, and that's probably because I've just become a bit more selfish. And I've started writing singing a bit more."

The boy-girl dialectic affects more than just the customary banter of the songs. Gareth, an atheist,

has been documenting a series of relationships with Christian women. Such new songs as "Be Your Friend" and the album's title track outline the heart of those discordant engagements.

"Belgium is one of the big three, if I were to file a sleeping sex and death in the proximity of things I can find to write songs about," he says.

Since the words are so important to Campesinos! songs, it might seem odd that Tim, the band's songwriter, writes the music before he's even got lyrics. "I think it's important to bear in mind that I have no marked ability whatsoever," says Gareth. "If I was to try to involve myself in any writing of songs from scratch, for sure I would provide just hassle and difficulty. Generally, I write prose as I write ideas, and I'll develop them as become songs. It's probably not the easiest way to write, but it seems to work for us."

The group's songwriting methods may not have changed since the first EP, but the collective skills and scope have expanded impressively. "We've grown up from students to adults while we've been in the band," Gareth notes. "It would take a longer time than me to go back and listen to our first record. That's something I've not done for a good three or so years. But from what I can remember, it would sound like a different group."

"I think a lot of people enjoyed it when the band was more carefree and juvenile," he adds. "But that's just one something that can be maintained over the course of a few albums without us being faded."

— MARK JENKINS



LOS CAMPESINOS!

Excitable Welsh indie-poppers get used to growing up—but not the glockenspiel

On his first day at the University of Cardiff, in 2005, Gareth Campesinos met someone who seemed weirdly familiar. "I went into the room of a stranger living in my dorm," says the Los Campesinos! singer-lyricist, "and I see this guy unrolling a Sonic Youth poster. Then I realized I was wearing a Sonic Youth T-shirt. I thought, 'I've gone away to school and met myself!'"

He wasn't far off—his doppelgänger was eventual Campesinos! guitarist Neil Campesinos (all seven band members share a surname). Inspired, says Gareth, by the belief they "could be less boring than the other bands at school," the fast friends recruited schoolmates Ellen (bass), Harriet (violin, keyboard), Ollie (drums), Tom (guitar), and since-departed trumpeter Aleksandra (recently

replaced by Kim), and then set about developing their surging, ramshackle tweemo sound, showcased on early singles like the joyously desperate "You! Me! Dancing!" from 2008's careening debut *Hold on Now, Youngster...* "We're easy to figure out," says the self-deprecating Gareth. "We're like a hyperactive Pavement, if they used more instruments and sang exclusively about past girlfriends."

Easy to suss or not, Los Campesinos! have caught on. A second album, *We Are Beautiful, We Are Doomed*, released five months after the first, brought with it dates at Lollapalooza and Coachella. In the U.K., the septet headlined a tour that included L.A. noise-punk heroes No Age. This year's U.S. dates will see the band attempting to contain their manic live show within the confines of 1,500- to 2,000-capacity venues. "We keep

playing bigger places," says Gareth. "It's amazing. There have been times I've been backstage and seen, like, Pete Wentz, which completely blew my mind. I keep expecting it to all end."

Romance Is Boring (Arts&Crafts), released in January, should extend the dream awhile longer, as tracks such as the moody "In Medias Res" show the group capable of being affecting even when they're not exploding. "The first two albums were about college and postcollege life," explains Gareth. "The new one is about being an adult. We're growing up." But the lovelorn frontman still has issues. "I'm stuck on the glockenspiel when I'm not singing," he sighs. "No one ever got laid from playing the glockenspiel."

BY DAVID MARCHESE
PHOTOGRAPH BY JON BERGMAN



Ollie, Ellen, Tom, Neil, Harriet, Gareth, and Kim Campesinos

November-December 2009



Website:
www.loscampesinos.com
MySpace:
myspace.com/loscampesinos

For Fans of:
The Smiths, Ra Ra Riot,
Belle & Sebastian



A BIG-BOW-WEARING 5-YEAR-OLD can get away with just about anything. All it takes is the bat of an eye and a deceptive smile of innocence to retract any inappropriate comment. Los Campesinos! is that kid.

With youthful exuberance, Los CI manages to weave the abrasive yet romantic, humorous but serious, bizarre but relatable truth into just about every song they sing. Perhaps it's the energy of early Brit-punk that erases all offense, or maybe it's their dreamy accents that have crowds on both sides of the pond swooning.

What was once a motley crew of university students from Cardiff, Wales, is now a seven-piece music machine taking the U.S. by storm. They are living the dream—and they know it. "We're in America," says Neil Campesinos!, one of the guitarists. "This is the best thing in the world to do and if you don't enjoy it, you might as well go home and get a job because we're in the most ridiculously privileged situation."

Sure, the electric rock instrumentation paired with a catchy vocal-centric aesthetic is probably enough to win over most, but really, it's the mildly inappropriate, yet relatable storytelling that makes it impossible not to love them. Their lyrics are the commentary in our heads—all those thoughts we can never muster up the courage to say aloud. Los CI is a fresh break from the fairy tale sonnets—their music is about a life we all know and live.

"If you've never heard us before, it would be quite difficult to dig through everything and actually hear the lyrics. But, if you can hear the lyrics then just take from it what you can," Neil says.

Los Campesinos! is whatever you make of it. Take it as indie-pop dance jams, the awkward truth said with a smile or simple interpretations of life's most complex issues. —MALLORY McCALL

BUST

June-July, 2010

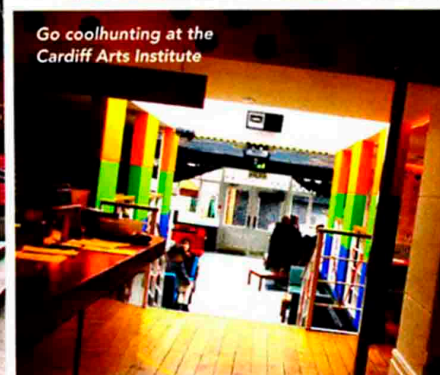
Cool AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 GIRLS [#44]



The Cardiff, Wales welcoming committee: Hamlet (left) and Ellen Campesinos!



Spillers Records will spin you right round



Go coolhunting at the Cardiff Arts Institute

cardiff, wales

THE LADIES OF THE BAND
LOS CAMPESINOS! SHOW US
AROUND THEIR HOMETOWN

WALES IS THE unsung beauty of the United Kingdom, and Cardiff, the country's capital, is the perfect place to explore its cobblestone streets, beautifully rural landscapes, and laid-back, unpretentious vibe. With a population of 324,800, Cardiff is by far the biggest city in Wales, so it's an important hub of activity—an intriguing mix of the old and new. On weekends the city's center is brimming with daytrippers who come down from The Valleys—traditional former coal-mining towns in the hills around the city, which are still, for the most part, old-fashioned places. You'll find tribes of kids outside the cafés, little old ladies going bargain hunting, and lots of young mums dressed to the nines parading on High Street. Cardiff is an elegant city with wide streets and gray stone houses bordered by the breathtaking coast on one side and lush hills on the other. The people of Cardiff are friendly, down-to-earth folks with a chirpy sense of humor, and everyone will call you "love." By U.K. standards, it's very cheap to live, eat, and drink here, so it's home to lots of young people and artistic types. Plus, it makes for a very affordable visit!

Taking a walk from the train station (Central Square) to Castle Street in the heart of the city center is the best way to see downtown Cardiff, which epitomizes the modern-meets-historic feel: a new, huge glass shopping mall and pedestrian-

ized avenue face the old Victorian arcades and indoor market. On weekends, stop at **Jacob's Market** (West Canal Wharf), just behind the station. Here you'll find three floors of myriad antiques and kitschy keepsakes. Carry on to **Spillers Records** (36 The Hayes), pride of Cardiff and "the oldest independent record shop in the world" (established in 1894!), which stocks lots of music made in Wales. For a taste of the old Cardiff, stroll through the nearby **arcades**, a Victorian version of a shopping mall, featuring a glassroofed walkway with rows of specialist shops that will sell all kinds of things, from violins to Welsh wool blankets. Then head to **The Plan** (28 Morgan Arcade), a café in the middle of the Morgan Arcade, for one of the best cups of coffee in Cardiff (its barista recently won third best foamer in the U.K.). Next door is a second-hand-book store called **Capital Bookshop** (27 Morgan Arcade), where you are sure to find something to treasure.

From Castle Street, it's a short walk to the **Riverside Market** (Fitzhamon Embankment), which takes place every Sunday morning so local farmers can sell their organic produce, special cheeses, and homemade sausages. There's also a delicious patisserie stall, a man who makes traditional crepes, and take-out lunch options, including curry, vegetarian pies, and soups. Pick some-

BUST

June-July, 2010



Flower power at Cathays Park



Capital Bookshop has a way with words



Get cultured at Cardiff's museum



Coffee for two at GwdiHw



How much is that Campesinos! in the window?

thing up, then head to the **National Museum Cardiff** (Cathays Park) for a picnic on the grass before going inside for a (free) dose of culture. Be sure to visit the life-size animatronic woolly mammoth and her baby.

Just down the road is a new café, bar, and music venue, misleadingly called **Cardiff Arts Institute** (29 Park Place). It's decorated with Legos and reclaimed furniture and is always hosting cool, free gigs (Islet, Xiu Xiu, and Tubelord have all played here). The little strip of restaurants and bars behind the shopping drag of nearby Queen Street is easily missed, but it's where one of our favorite bars can be found: **GwdiHw** (6 Guildford Crescent)—pronounced Goody Hoo, it means owl in Welsh—is a cozy little living room of an establishment serving delicious coffee, good beer, salads, and cakes. There is usually a DJ playing records, and occasionally, local bands and jazz musicians play in the small outdoor area.

The Bay Area is a 15-minute train ride from the city center, and though the traditional working docks have been turned into a seaside tourist spot, it's still worth a visit—the entire Welsh coastline is incredibly beautiful. There are lots of bars and restaurants overlooking the sea, but the real gem is the wooden **Nor-**

wegian Church (Harbour Drive), which you'll find in an isolated spot along the curve of the bay. Sometimes the church-turned-arts center has atmospheric candlelit music events. During the day, there is a little café open inside, a good alternative to the chain restaurants that dominate most of the Bay Area.

For a neighborhood experience, make your way to Roath, the main streets of which—Albany Road, Crwys Road, and City Road—are generally teeming with a bustling mixture of students, young professionals, retired folks, and families. But the biggest draw there is **Roath Park and Lake** (just beyond Albany Rd.), so meander by the water's edge and through the rose gardens before stopping for a spot of tea at **Waterloo Gardens Teahouse** (5 Waterloo Gardens), a lovely specialty tea and coffee shop at one end of the park. When you're ready for a meal, trek back to City Road and grab a table at our favorite place to eat in Cardiff: **Tenkaichi** (236 City Rd.), a Japanese restaurant with wooden benches and a high-quality, extensive menu that includes noodles, sushi, vegetable dishes, and great bento boxes. Across the street is **Milgi** (213 City Rd.), a popular bar with a big heated yurt in the backyard (where they hold a monthly vintage and craft market). And stop in the **Milkwood**

Gallery (14 Lochaber St.) for a dreamy browse through the shop's vintage knickknacks, clothes, and arts-and-craftsy objects for the home. Cardiff is the perfect mix of city and country, new-school and old-school, and a supercharming place to boot. So pack your bags, Love, and come to Cardiff for a visit!

Sound Check MORE ABOUT LOS CAMPESINOS!

This seven-member indie-rock band has come a long way from their first gig, at a student union club night at Cardiff University where they formed in 2006. Earlier this year, the energetic popsters released their third album, *Romance Is Boring*, on Arts & Crafts. The 15 urgent tracks showcase ultrapersonal lyrics, group singing/shouting, and instrumental explosions that include whistles, handclaps, strings, brass, feedback, and more. Los Campesinos! leave no sound unplayed, and the result is awesome. Check 'em out at www.myspace.com/loscampesinos.



Los Campesinos!

The UK band's candid frontman Gareth speaks on new album Hello Sadness.

By Ryan Dombal, January 12, 2012



Photos by Jon Bergman

In the middle of a Brooklyn gig last November, [Los Campesinos!](#) leader [Gareth](#) took a moment to thank the very-psyched audience for their enthusiasm. But this wasn't some "hello Cleveland!" bullshit-- he was genuinely and visibly grateful, and a little surprised. Even though this UK group released [their debut EP](#) just five years ago, they've become quick indie rock mainstays thanks to [four rich and consistent albums](#), including the recent [Hello Sadness](#). In our click-click-delete world, any sort of continued relevance is a rare and coveted thing. Gareth knows this, and that's probably part of why he still gets a rush out of people screaming, bursting, and clapping along with his band's songs.

We meet in a quiet room backstage before the show; I take the couch, he takes a glorified folding chair. The casual 26 year old is sporting some weathered bedhead as he gamely muses on everything from the power of [Drake](#) to the peace of graveyards. A big part of Los Campesinos! appeal is the one-of-us factor-- with their clever, complex, and candid songs about heartbreak and twentysomething confusion, it's not a huge stretch for fans to think they could easily pal around with the group, especially Gareth.

And, during our conversation, he certainly lives up to that rep, always equipped with a self-deprecating remark or an inquisitive follow-up. Talking about personally packing a recent shipment of the band's fanzine [Heat Rash](#), he says, "It's the sort of thing we could pay someone else to do, but I wouldn't have been doing anything better in those four days anyway."

Los Campesinos! embody the homemade 90s indie aesthetic but also aren't afraid to adapt to today's DIY culture, where a [placement in a beer ad](#) is all but necessary to keep a seven-piece group thriving and building. It's a tricky balance, but Gareth and his band mates still look like they're having a hell of a time trying to figure it all out. We spoke about ex-girlfriends, blissfully cold suds, and the trappings of Tumblr.

*"It seems like such a ludicrous thing to say,
but I think Drake and I write about similar things a lot of the time."*

Pitchfork: You wrote [a piece for our 15th anniversary feature last year](#) and mentioned that you were going through a break up and hoped making *Hello Sadness* would put you in a better headspace. Did that work out?

Gareth Campesinos!: The good thing about an album coming out is that it provides distractions, and you stop stewing on your personal life. But I think I'm perpetually going to be in that wounded, or faux-wounded, position-- though I'm probably better now than at the time of the breakup. I've reconciled myself to just being honest. It suits the band. And that level of transparency helps stuff get sorted out. It's also a good way of getting messages to specific people without having to speak directly to them, which is probably terrible. Though I sent the album to the girl it's written about, and she's been very understanding. She actually said how much she likes it, so that's good.

Pitchfork: People must know what they're getting into when they start a relationship with a singer nowadays.

GC: Yeah. *[laughs]* It's weird because since the band started, I've found myself in a couple of situations where someone's aware of how I write, and there's the worry of: "Are you going to write a song about me?" But there are also situations where somebody's *excited* at the prospect-- and that's not any kind of motivation I want to know about.

Pitchfork: Seems like a warning sign.

GC: Yeah. And to be honest, if you're trying to achieve any level of fame by getting involved with me, that's just a terrible idea.

Watch the video for "By Your Hand" from *Hello Sadness*:

Pitchfork: This is your fourth album-- do you think it's gotten to the point where you've got your loyal fans and that's it?

GC: I don't think we want to settle for that, and we can't always rely on the people that like us currently to like us indefinitely. We want to do this for as long as people will allow us to do it. But you can't really do anything forever, I suppose.

There are so many people who wish we'd make another [Hold on Now, Youngster...](#), but I find it so ridiculous because that would be lying and anathema to what we do as a band. We're a lot more aspirational than the way we behave a lot of the time would suggest. Like, doing something like a fanzine isn't exactly a forward-thinking idea, but we've had experiences of playing big shows with the Cribbs in the UK, and Lollapalooza. It's incredible playing to loads of people. We love it. I think we're actually very good at it, but nobody else seems to agree. *[laughs]* I can still appreciate that there's a lot about the band that would make us difficult to get into, but that's not to say we don't want to strive to play to more people. We did a Budweiser ad for fuck's sake! What else are we supposed to do? *[laughs]*

"Where I'm from, people basically think I'm a waster. But after that Budweiser ad was on the telly, people at the pub were like, 'Oh, that's him.'"

Pitchfork: You make fun of that ad a lot, but putting music in commercials is a legitimate modern indie dilemma.

GC: There comes a time when people have to accept if they're going to illegally download music, then bands are going to have to make money elsewhere. We were actually offered a larger sum of money for ["You! Me! Dancing"](#) from Southern Comfort just after it was released, and we turned it down. I still think we were right to, because at that stage of our career people would have just wanted to hear that version of the song over and over. But when it came back up it was just the easiest decision to make because that money is now enabling us to be a band for another two years. And the response has been overtly positive, I think because we've not shied away from it like a lot of bands probably would.

We played this gig in St. Louis, which is where Budweiser's based, and two guys from their promotional team came to watch the gig and they brought up 12 bottles of Budweiser. It was the coldest beer. At the time we were selling these bootleg Budweiser t-shirts, and they were like, "We saw those shirts." I'm thinking they're going to ask us to give all the money back from the commercial right then. But they're like, "We love them, can we get some?"

Where I'm from, people know I'm in a band but they basically think I'm a waster. But after that ad was on the telly, people at the pub were like, "Oh, that's him." I'm actually really proud to have that song on there.

Pitchfork: I don't want to be rude, but I'm always curious how much bands make from those placements.

GC: It's a substantial figure. And the ad itself has been really successful and has won awards. They did all these different versions and kept being like, "We want to run it for another eight months, can we give you more money?"

Sadly, as individuals, we haven't seen a penny yet. Apparently, the nature of publishing money being paid back is slow, so we have to wait another 18 months before we actually realize where we stand. We've been able to buy some new equipment as a band, but it's not like, "Here's a check for a thousand bucks, now go out and buy Rolexes." So the fact that we may have sold out but are still very poor at the moment always makes me feel more comfortable.



Pitchfork: There was an interesting point brought up in [our review of *Hello Sadness*](#) about how Los Campesinos! are really engaging with listeners musically and lyrically in a direct way at a time when a lot of indie music seems to be heading toward something more disengaged.

GC: I agree guitar bands are moving away from directness. I guess there is something a little embarrassing about that level of emoting, it's very easy to dismiss and ridicule. It's probably why I listen to less guitar music now-- everything seems a bit more vague and wash-y.

It's funny because I'm a massive Drake fan-- [Take Care](#) is my favorite album of the year-- and he's moving toward that specificity in his lyrics. It seems like such a ludicrous thing to say, but I think Drake and I write about similar things a lot of the time. *[laughs]* There's a lyric from the new track with Stevie Wonder [["Doing It Wrong"](#)]: "We live in a

generation of not being in love and not being together/ But we sure make it feel like we're together/ 'Cause we're scared to see each other with somebody else." That lyric is just like loads of Los Campesinos! songs. But he managed to put it into a few lines rather than four albums. [laughs] Nice one, Drake.

But, as a lyricist, I think it's odd how bad lyrics are seemingly more forgivable within rap music than in the context of a guitar band. There are so many amazing couplets on the Drake album, but if you said some of them in the context of a guitar record, it would be laughable. Within guitar music, there are still people who turn their noses up at somebody who is emoting or even trying to be clever. They say, "Oh, he's trying too hard." I'm accused of that all the time-- quite possibly rightly sometimes.

Pitchfork: Well, with someone like Drake, he may expose himself emotionally on one song and then talk about how he's the greatest on the next.

GC: It's a very weird paradox how he's so vulnerable and then he's like, "What? I don't think that. It wasn't me! I'm here with all this money and these girls." I need to work on that side!

Pitchfork: The *Hello Sadness* track "Songs About Your Girlfriend" is really biting-- it kind of sounds like your version of a braggadocious rap song.

GC: It was intended to be the dis hit-- the first line is ripped slightly from [a T.I. song](#). I think the level of animosity that our band has seen in the UK is a little bit disproportionate because we came from this background of personal message boards. Some people are like, "Oh, that could have been my band!" I think people are a little bit jealous that we've done all right with it, so that song was a sly up-yours.

"Songs About Your Girlfriend"

Pitchfork: You talk about how people in England specifically don't seem to totally understand your band. And there's this song "Hate for the Island" on *Hello Sadness* about your dislike of England, which made me wonder why you wouldn't try living somewhere else.

GC: Well, I'm very, very, very close to my family. I couldn't bear to be away from that. And I also like complaining a lot-- it's one of my favorite things. I'm sort of very ambitious with what we can achieve with the band, but on a personal level I'm not very aspirational. I'm from a very working-class family from a small town, and I'm happy with that. I just like playing football and going to the pub. To move somewhere else, I'd have to have higher expectations for myself, which I couldn't burden myself with.

You mention "Hate for the Island", and I had an email interview that I took about two weeks to fill out because one of the questions was: "Is the song 'Hate for the Island' about the TV show 'Lost'?" And I just couldn't find a way to answer the question without

either being obnoxious or just saying no and making it seem like I had a terrible sense of humor.

"It's weird to see the way I've basically put the last four years of my romantic life on record. I admire lyricists like Joanna Newsom who transfer themselves to this parallel universe, but I wouldn't be capable of that."

Pitchfork: Over the last few years, a couple of people have left the band to go back to school. Have you ever considered doing something like that?

GC: No. It's probably more typical of British bands-- and especially British bands with overly emotional frontmen who apply their personal life into songs-- just to keep going and going while fewer and fewer people care. But that would be embarrassing. It sounds cheesy, but we really do believe in this band. We know that people who do like us really, really like us, and that's not the sort of thing you could ever really give up on. It's funny because every time somebody leaves the band there are fans on messages boards saying, "I really think is the last Campesinos album." But we're happier than we ever have been; we have a new lease on life.

We often get asked, "It must be pretty difficult having seven people in the band." But I think it makes things so much easier because, if you're in a three-piece band, then you're stuck with those two other people all the time. But with there being seven of us, if someone pisses you off you have five other people that you can go to to bitch about it. [laughs]

Watch the video for the title track from *Hello Sadness*:

Pitchfork: It seems like you're more comfortable writing about sex now, even if it's usually in a self-deprecating way.

GC: Well, I'm not any sort of pin-up, so it's easier to talk about things like that because it immediately has a comedic element to it and it doesn't seem like boasting. Usually, when people sing about sex, you think, "OK, we know you've had sex! You don't need to tell us!" But I think the way that it's set up in a Los Campesinos! song makes it easier to do because it's truthful. And I think indie music fans are more sexualized than they were five years ago because of this boom of things like Tumblr. Everyone seems a lot more sure of themselves and their sexuality, so people want that more in song lyrics.

Pitchfork: Compared to online publishers like Blogspot or LiveJournal, Twitter and Tumblr seem to make it easier to put a contrived image of yourself online.

GC: The whole thing with LiveJournal, WordPress, and Blogspot was oversharing in a detailed way, whereas Tumblr encourages you to just post an image and it's done. It's so easy to create this collage of yourself where each image means nothing and gives no information, but when you compile them all together you can create this person that you want to be. [That thing that Drake said about Tumblr](#) was fucking brilliant-- it was

brave of him to say so openly that it kind of sucks and to criticize everybody who uses it. It is fucking spooky. And I'm so glad that it didn't exist when I was a teenager because it would have been horrific.

Pitchfork: But you're still exposing yourself in your own way now.

GC: Yeah. It's weird to see the way I've basically put the last four years of my romantic life on record, because it's journalistic and factual. I admire lyricists like Joanna Newsom who transfer themselves to this parallel universe, but I wouldn't be capable of that. I find writing lyrics easy because I'm just writing about myself. It's always incredibly flattering when people praise my lyrics, but it's odd too because I'm not really doing anything. It just happens.

Pitchfork: Well, I think you're selling yourself a little bit short there. I mean, it at least has to rhyme every once in awhile.

GC: *[laughs]* I guess so. But it's not in my nature to think, "I'll sit down and get these thoughts off of my chest." Lyrics are always done in the last few days of recording when all of the music is complete. I think the lyrics to [*We Are Beautiful, We Are Doomed*](#) were all written in the space of three days. My main motivation to write is time pressure. It's not as if I slave over it, so I feel like if it's something that's really good, it should be harder to do.



Pitchfork: Do you still have any sort of day job?

GC: I work part time cutting grass in a graveyard when we're off tour. Just ten hours a week at a local church, maintaining the cemetery. It's actually something that makes me incredibly happy. Just before we came to the U.S. we had two days off so I was working down there to make some pocket money. So I was listening to the new Drake album amongst all these gravestones, just wielding the trimmer like I'm playing air guitar. But you have to be careful not to get caught. With that job, there's a genuine sense of doing something good: There are all these graves, and if I didn't cut the grass, nobody would. It's just so peaceful. People are really genuinely grateful that the work's being done.

Pitchfork: Do you do any of the digging?

GC: No digging. [*laughs*] I've not quite graduated to that.

<http://pitchfork.com/features/interviews/8753-los-campesinos/>

NOVEMBER 2011

REVIEWS *(continued)*

Los Campesinos!

Hello Sadness



ARTS & CRAFTS

Los Campesinos! can't stop adorning their odes to existential grief with snappy handclaps, but the Welsh septet are still showing signs of growth on this third album. Keyboards, horns, and strings crescendo harder than ever on the title track, and the interlocking backing vocals of Ellen and (the now-departed) Harriet Campesinos! soar like an indie glee-club choir on "Songs About Your Girlfriend." But even as he approaches Belle and Sebastian levels of chamber-pop craft,

Rolling Stone

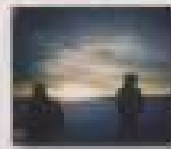
DECEMBER 8, 2011

Los Campesinos!

★★★★½

Hello Sadness *Arts & Crafts*

Welsh sad sacks have great melodies and no love life



The first couple of records from these Welsh indie rockers were full of orchestral, ADD twee-punk, like Belle and Sebastian on a Ramones jag. But 2010's *Romance Is Boring* showed a restraint and musical muscle they continue to display on *Disc Four*. One thing remains constant: Gareth Campesinos' Anthony Michael Hall level of sexual frustration. He provides as many squirm-worthy scenarios as he does grandiose pop buildups and violin-laden hooks. On "By Your Hand," a girl pukes on his rental tux mid-hookup, and on "The Black Bird, The Dark Slope," blackbirds feast on his insides. His romantic failure makes for fine songs — now if only he could get laid.

BRYANT KITCHING

Key Tracks: "Songs About Your Girlfriend," "Hello Sadness"



DECEMBER, 2011

MOPE ROCK

LOS CAMPESINOS!


★★★★☆

Hello Sadness



Now that the voice of Gareth Campesinos! has deepened, so has his tone. Turns out, some Conor Oberst comparisons—lyrically and vocally—are appropriate. Although the giddy “By Your Hand” preserves the fully orchestrated twee rep of this U.K. indie-pop collective, much of Los Campesinos!’ fourth album lives up to the dark title, *Hello Sadness*. In tones echoing post-university angst, love lost and self-mutilation, our singer

plows a gorgeous, destructive path with the jagged, moody “Hate For The Island” and the black humor of “Baby I Got The Death Rattle.” “You are an angel, that’s why you pray/And I am an ass, that’s why I bray,” he sings bitterly in the latter. His band match his pain note-for-note for a brutal but rewarding listen. (ARTS & CRAFTS; arts-crafts.ca) *Reed Fischer*

GO DOWNLOAD  “By Your Hand”

BUST

December/January 2012



LOS CAMPESINOS!

Hello Sadness

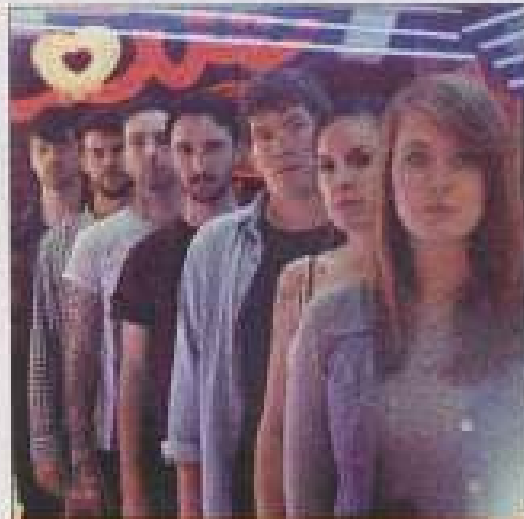
(Arts & Crafts)

Two weeks before Los Campesinos! recorded *Hello Sadness*, frontman Gareth Campesinos! broke up with his girlfriend. So it's somewhat surprising that their fourth full-length album is full of colorful, inexplicably sunny songs that run the stylistic gamut from pop to post-rock. "By Your Hand" opens with a Casio-tinged melody and hand-clapped chorus—not exactly what you'd associate with a fresh breakup. Indie rock pioneers Pavement have clearly informed the band's sound, so much so that Gareth's subtly detached vocals often make him sound like a Welsh Stephen Malkmus. "Songs About Your Girlfriend" is nervier but still veers into more poppy territory; think Los Campesinos! y Ted Leo. Even the semi-dark "Every Defeat a Divorce (Three Lions)" eventually resolves into an anthem replete with orchestral touches. The same goes for "To Tundra," which puts a gauzy sheen on lost love. If *Hello Sadness* is truly a "breakup" album, it was worth the pain. Splitting up never sounded so fun. [DYLAN STABLEFORD]

DECEMBER 2011



The songs on the first few Los Campesinos! albums were as earnest and impassioned as a freshman-year romance.



LOS CAMPEVINOS!

Hello Sadness

Arts & Crafts

★★★★

But beneath the wild-eyed intensity there throbbed undercurrents of spite and melancholy, if not nastiness and depression. Now Los Campesinos!, who all attended the University of Cardiff in Wales, have matriculated into masters of self-laceration. While front-man Gareth David tries to talk tough ("I'll have my hot hands over her soft parts soon," goes "Songs About Your Girlfriend"), he's best when battered: "By Your Hand" dreams of post-romance death, and the bruised yawp of "The Black Bird, The Dark Slope" makes disembowelment sound like relief.

DETAILS

December 2011/January 2012



THE YES LIST

FIVE THINGS WE
EMPHATICALLY
ENDORSE
THIS MONTH



MUSIC

WELSH ROCKERS WHO MAKE SAD SONGS FUN

Though the Welsh indie septet Los Campesinos! titled their latest effort *Hello Sadness*, the exclamation mark after their name gives away their true nature. The album is a 10-song narrative of a breakup, but thanks to its upbeat melodies and lush instrumentation, splitsville has never sounded so good. *Out now.*



[Los Campesinos!](#)

Hello Sadness

Arts & Crafts / Wichita; 2011

By Jordan Sargent; November 16, 2011



8.0

The music of [Los Campesinos!](#) has always been about straddling the line between sincerity and irony. It's a tough game to play, but thanks to songwriter Gareth Campesinos' wry humor and self-deprecation, the band has been able to make a career out of writing songs where breakups literally equal death. The music is intensely personal, but it's equally as inclusive-- Gareth paints himself as having it worse than anyone, but the unspoken acknowledgment that makes the band churn is that he really just has it as bad as everyone else.

Hello Sadness is the band's fourth album, and though not much has changed with the band itself, the ground underneath which LC! stand has shifted. Gareth's style of writing-

- naked oversharing that goes far past the margins of his pad-- used to feel like a natural outgrowth of the type of discourse found at places like LiveJournal and Blogger, but those mediums are dinosaurs now, replaced by the opacity of Tumblr and the short, controlled blasts of Twitter. Likewise, the band's serrated twee is not exactly in fashion in the world of indie rock right now, a truth that's an undercurrent of their [announcement](#) late last year that they would be distributing a quarterly fanzine. But, if LC! are the last men and women left holding the flag for an antiquated era of indie rock, it has only intensified their vitality to those looking for more than chillwave's call to tune in, turn on, and drop out.

Though the album is arguably the band's darkest yet, it starts off with both the album's peppiest song and one of LC!'s best singles to date. "[By Your Hand](#)" finds Gareth at the very infancy of a budding romance, and it casts him as a sort of lovable hero, a role that he inhabits when he's not, say, fantasizing about burning the skin off his hands before going to a palmist. Gareth narrates himself initiating another round of dirty texting before breaking into one of the more memorable passages he's penned: his fooling around with "fate"-- "a cruel mistress, girl"-- who suggests that the two go back to her place, where "fate" then, naturally, vomits on him. He does this with gusto, which is accentuated by the chorus, wherein the entire band shouts, "By your hand is the only end that I foresee." The exuberance, not just for the romance itself but for his eventual end at the hand of his lover, is crucial to Gareth's ability to write songs about what happens when the relationship is at the other end of the spectrum. We know that he's always coming back for more, even when the rest of us can't stomach it.

Otherwise *Hello Sadness* is an album largely obsessed with themes of despair and images of death, but Gareth is an able gallows humorist. On the album's final track he enters a slaughterhouse where he sees his guts strung up, only for him to be turned away because "his sad eyes are too much to bear." On "Baby, I Got the Death Rattle" he gets frostbite from scribbling dicks in the snow for every girl that wouldn't sleep with him before watching a halo slip from the top of his lover's head and, presumably, decapitate her. And then there is "Every Defeat a Divorce (Three Lions)", Gareth's long-coming ode to the English soccer team, wherein crosses on the pitch become crucifixes and the team's crest nearly claws him to death. It is the album's centerpiece, if only because for Gareth, and for a lot of us, the one thing more wrenching than romance is sports.

These songs are genuinely affecting, though, both because they explore the darkest depths of a romantic's psyche and because LC! have transitioned rather seamlessly into maturity. The fizzy, excitable songwriting of their early output is far in the past, and they've learned to write songs that build and swell to moments that can knock you off your feet ("To Tundra" is the killer here). Gareth also explores his range as a vocalist to great success, stretching himself to sing melodically and in a strikingly deeper voice. His vocals have long been a breaking point for many non-converts, and while Gareth hasn't morphed into [King Krule](#), his impressive singing here bodes well for the future of a band whose music largely revolves around him.

The buzz has long worn off of Los Campesinos!, but *Hello Sadness* is their fourth straight great album, and each of them is close enough in quality that you'd likely get split numbers if you conducted a straw poll at one of the band's shows. Even if there is no breakthrough moment for them, there is something to be said for a band that is this young, this consistent, and this committed to both carrying the torch for and freshening up a style of indie rock that has, for the moment at least, been left behind.

<http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/16036-hello-sadness/>